

Frequently Asked Questions

Cost Sharing Program for the Electronic Logbook (ELB) Program for the Gulf of Mexico Shrimp Fishery

December 2013

What is the ELB program?

- The program is a way of collecting information on the amount and location of shrimp fishing effort. It has been in place since 2007.
- Current regulations require Gulf shrimp permit holders to participate in the ELB program, if selected by NOAA Fisheries. Vessels are randomly selected to participate from the pool of active fishing vessels.
- Vessels selected to participate must carry data recording devices which are simple time-stamped global positioning system (GPS) units that record a vessel's location at 10-minute time intervals.
- From these time-stamped locations, vessel speed between points can be estimated, then evaluated to determine if the vessel was stopped, towing, or moving between towing points.
- With this information, effort can be calculated for a given fishing trip.

What are the changes to the program?

- The costs of the program will now be shared by shrimp vessel permit holders and NOAA Fisheries.
 - Gulf shrimp vessel permit holders must pay for the costs of installing and maintaining the ELB units and the cost of data transmission through a wireless provider.
 - NOAA Fisheries has purchased the ELB units, and will pay for software development, data storage, effort estimation analysis, and archival activities.
- New units will be used and administered by NOAA Fisheries, rather than an outside contractor.
 - These units have been tested and will provide the same data as the previous units.
 - The new units use wireless service to transmit data. They do not require removal of the data card, as with the old units.

Why do shrimp permit holders need to help fund the program?

- Currently, NOAA Fisheries funds the deployment of ELB units on approximately 500 shrimp vessels through an outside contractor. The current contract will expire on December 31, 2013. Funding is not available to renew the contract.
- Units using more modern and efficient technology are now available that would not require NOAA Fisheries to retain a contractor. To continue the program, regardless of the equipment used, industry would need to share in the cost of the program.
- If outside funding becomes available, such as oil spill restoration money administered by a third-party, the current program could be continued for multiple years to allow a smoother transition to the new units, and cost sharing may not be needed.

How much will it cost each selected vessel owner?

- The current estimate is \$20 per month for data transmission. The cost of data transfer was previously estimated at about \$720 per vessel annually. Recent negotiations with the wireless provider have substantially reduced this cost to \$240 per year.

- One-time installation is estimated to cost approximately \$200.

How will I know if I am selected?

- In mid-August, a letter was sent to all permit holders explaining the ELB program and the selection process.
- After the final implementation, selected permit holders will receive a second letter announcing their selection and outlining instructions for activating the ELB unit.
- Selected vessel owners will have a total of 90 days to comply with the regulations to install and activate their new ELB units (30 days to activate a wireless account and 60 days to install the new ELB unit) after it has been shipped by NOAA Fisheries and received by the vessel owner.

What will be expected of vessel owners selected to participate in the program for 2014?

- To activate their accounts, selected vessel owners must contact Verizon Wireless by e-mail at VZWGulfCoastELB@VerizonWireless.com or by phone at 888-211-3258.
- NOAA Fisheries will ship the ELB unit to the vessel owner after the account has been activated, and vessel owners will be responsible for installation of the units. This should be similar to installing other electronics (GPS, radio, etc.) on the vessel.
- After the unit is installed and activated, data will be transmitted to NOAA Fisheries without any action needed by the vessel operator. Data will be collected and stored until the vessel is within cellular range for transmission.

How are the data from the ELB program used?

- Data collected through the program are critical in performing annual assessments of the status of shrimp stocks.
- The effort data are used to estimate juvenile red snapper mortality by the shrimp fishery, which is essential to the red snapper rebuilding plan.
- Accurate estimates of shrimp fishing effort from the program are used to estimate and monitor incidental sea turtle takes.

Where can I find more information on management of the Gulf shrimp fishery?

- For more information, please visit http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/gulf_fisheries/shrimp/index.html.